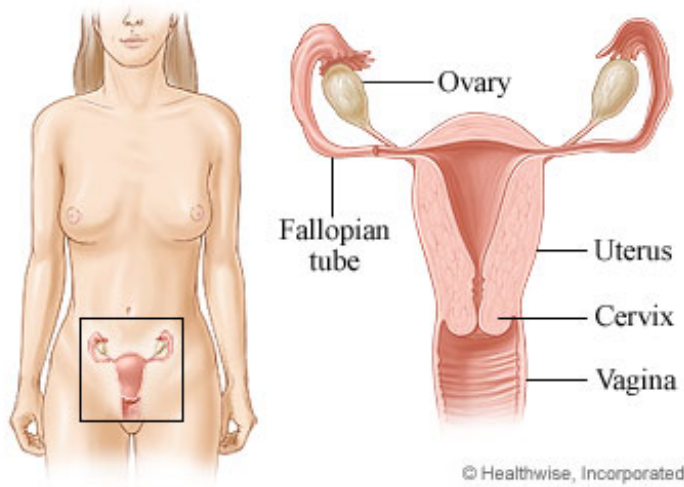


# Bacterial Vaginosis: Care Instructions



## Overview

Bacterial vaginosis is a type of vaginal infection. It is caused by excess growth of certain bacteria that are normally found in the vagina. Symptoms can include itching, swelling, pain when you urinate or have sex, and a gray or yellow discharge with a "fishy" odor. It is not considered an infection that is spread through sexual contact.

Symptoms can be annoying and uncomfortable. But bacterial vaginosis does not usually cause other health problems. However, if you have it while you are pregnant, it can cause complications.

While the infection may go away on its own, most doctors use antibiotics to treat it. You may have been prescribed pills or vaginal cream. With treatment, bacterial vaginosis usually clears up in 5 to 7 days.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your antibiotics as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Do not eat or drink anything that contains alcohol if you are taking metronidazole or tinidazole.
- Keep using your medicine if you start your period. Use pads instead of tampons while using a vaginal cream or suppository. Tampons can absorb the medicine.
- Wear loose cotton clothing. Do not wear nylon and other materials that hold body heat and moisture close to the skin.
- Do not scratch. Relieve itching with a cold pack or a cool bath.
- Do not wash your vaginal area more than once a day. Use plain water or a mild, unscented soap. Do not douche.

## When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have unexpected vaginal bleeding.
- You have a fever.
- You have new or increased pain in your vagina or pelvis.
- You are not getting better after 1 week.
- Your symptoms return after you finish the course of your medicine.

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